

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 296709

FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 20675 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO
AMMAN BEIRUT BRUSSELS DAMASCUS JIDDA LONDON MOSCOW TEL AVIV
DEC 08.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 20675

BRUSSELS FOR SECDEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EG XF OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)

SUBJECT: MOOD IN CAIRO ON EVE OF SECRETARY'S VISIT

SUMMARY. EGYPTIANS HAVE HIGH HOPES THAT PEACE PROCESS
MOVING FORWARD AND THAT WHILE SADAT PRIME MOVER, U.S.
HIGHLY SUPPORTIVE. SUPPORT AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF
PUBLIC BASED ON SINCERE DESIRE FOR PEACE AND PERCEPTION
THAT PEACE WILL BRING PROSPERITY. IN ADDITION NEW FEEL-
ING OF EGYPTIAN NATIONALISM AND COMPREHENSION EGYPT'S
ABILITY TO GO IT ALONE HAVE COME TO FORE. GREATEST FEAR
KNOWLEDGEABLE OFFICIALS IS THAT SADAT GAMBLE WILL NOT
SUCCEED BECAUSE OF ISRAELI UNWILLINGNESS TO MAKE CON-
CESSIONS AND U.S. INABILITY TO DELIVER ISRAEL. SECRE-
TARY'S VISIT CONSIDERED MAJOR DEMONSTRATION OF U.S.
SUPPORT AND FIRST STEP IN WHAT EGYPTIANS HOPE WILL BE
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STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE U.S. ROLE TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE
SETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. MOOD IN CAIRO IN ANTICIPATION OF SECRETARY VANCE'S
ARRIVAL DEC 9 IS DISTINCTLY DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS
VISITS. PRIOR TO SECRETARY'S ARRIVAL IN FEB AND AUG,
EGYPTIAN PUBLIC AND OFFICIALS WERE PLACING THEIR HOPES
FOR PROGRESS ON PEACE PROCESS ALMOST ENTIRELY ON WHAT

SECRETARY WOULD ACCOMPLISH. U.S. WAS CLEARLY CONSIDERED MAJOR MOVER AND SHAKER. TODAY, HIGH HOPES THAT PEACE IS COMING IN NEAR FUTURE ALREADY EXIST AS RESULT SADAT'S DRAMATIC INITIATIVES. EGYPTIANS ARE ALMOST UNANIMOUS IN THEIR SUPPORT OF SADAT AND PROUD THAT EGYPT IS NOW PRIME MOVER IN PEACE PROCESS.

2. U.S. ROLE. THERE IS AT SAME TIME WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT U.S. CONTINUES PLAY KEY ROLE. OPINIONS RUN ENTIRE SPECTRUM FROM U.S. CALLING SADAT'S SHOTS TO MERE U.S.-GOE CONSULTATIONS. HOWEVER, SINCE SADAT'S RECENT STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS DEMONSTRATE APPARENT DETERMINATION TO CUT SOVIETS OUT OF PEACE PROCESS ALTOGETHER, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT REMAINING IN ANY EGYPTIAN'S MIND THAT U.S. FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF SADAT. THUS SECRETARY'S VISIT TO AREA -- WITH EGYPT AS FIRST STOP -- CONSIDERED LOGICAL AND COMFORTING.

3. PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS. MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT SUPPORT AND HIGH EXPECTATIONS OF EGYPTIAN PUBLIC ARE BASED PRIMARILY ON TWO ELEMENTS: (A) SINCERE DESIRE FOR PEACE AND NORMALCY AFTER 30 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS STATE OF WAR AND HEAVY CASUALTIES DURING FOUR ACTUAL CONFLICTS; AND (B) PERCEPTION, JUSTIFIABLE OR NOT, THAT PEACE WILL BRING EARLY IMPROVEMENT IN ECONOMIC LOT OF AVERAGE EGYPTIAN. COUPLED WITH THESE EXPECTATIONS IS A NEW FEELING

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OF EGYPTIAN NATIONALISM AND A COMPREHENSION OF EGYPT'S RELATIVE POWER POSITION WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD. SADAT'S INITIATIVES AND HIS OPEN DEFIANCE OF RADICAL ARABS HAVE WON ADMIRATION OF ALMOST ALL EGYPTIANS AND DEMONSTRATED TO THEM THAT EGYPT IS INDEED THE GREAT POWER OF THE ARAB WORLD AND CAN DO WHAT IS BEST FOR ITSELF REGARDLESS OF ARAB OPPOSITION. PRIMORDIAL ROLE OF EGYPT IN ARAB POLITICS WAS SOMEHOW LOST, IN MINDS OF MANY EGYPTIANS, AS RESULT OF NASSER'S FASCINATION WITH ARAB NATIONALISM AND SOLIDARITY. AS ONE SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL PUT IT, EGYPT GOING ITS OWN WAY WITH SINAI II WAS THE TRANSITION STAGE FOR WHAT TODAY HAS BECOME POLICY OF EGYPT ACTING COMPLETELY INDEPENDENTLY (AND ENJOYING IT).

4. RUNNING THROUGHOUT EGYPTIAN OPINION, PARTICULARLY AMONG KNOWLEDGEABLE OFFICIALS, IS ONLY ONE FEAR. THE FEAR THAT SADAT'S COURAGEOUS GAMBLE WILL NOT SUCCEED. ONE MFA UNDER-SECRETARY TOLD POLCOUNS THAT, IN HIS VIEW, SADAT HAS RISKED HIS POLITICAL AND PERSONAL LIFE AND THAT HE WAS FORCED TO DO SO BY AMERICAN INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO BRING ABOUT PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE FAST ENOUGH. HE AND OTHER LESS CRITICAL OFFICIALS ARE NOW COUNTING HEAVILY

UPON U.S. SUPPORT AND INFLUENCE OVER ISRAEL TO MOVE PROCESS TO SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. ONE MEMBER OF GOE WORKING GROUP FOR CAIRO CONFERENCE SAID HE ENVISAGES U.S. ROLE AS CLOSELY MONITORING COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND STEPPING IN TO BREAK STALEMATES WHEN AND IF THEY ARRIVE. HIS GREAT FEAR IS THAT ISRAEL WILL NOT MAKE SUFFICIENT CONCESSIONS ON WEST BANK AND GOLAN TO ENABLE SADAT TO PRESENT "CREDIBLE" FRAMEWORK OFFER FOR SETTLEMENT TO OTHER PARTIES. CLEARLY HE AND OTHER OFFICIALS BELIEVE IT IS UP TO U.S. TO ENSURE THAT ISRAEL MAKE THESE CONCESSIONS. THEY INSIST THAT SADAT'S INITIATIVES AND CONCESSIONS HE HAS ALREADY MADE BY TRIP TO JERUSALEM (I.E. NATURE OF PEACE) HAVE MADE IT MUCH EASIER FOR CARTER ADMINISTRATION TO OVERCOME OPPOSITION OF ISRAEL AND ITS SUPPORTERS IN THE U.S.

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5. COMMENT: IN SHORT, SECRETARY'S FORTHCOMING VISIT IS NOT, IN EGYPTIAN VIEW, EXPECTED TO PRODUCE SHORT-TERM RESULTS AS WAS HOPED OF EARLIER TWO VISITS. IT IS, HOWEVER, CONSIDERED A MAJOR DEMONSTRATION OF U.S. SUPPORT AND FIRST STEP IN WHAT EGYPTIANS EXPECT WILL BE CONTINUOUS AND STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE U.S. ROLE IN REACHING FINAL COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, WHETHER AT GENEVA OR ELSEWHERE.

EILTS UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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